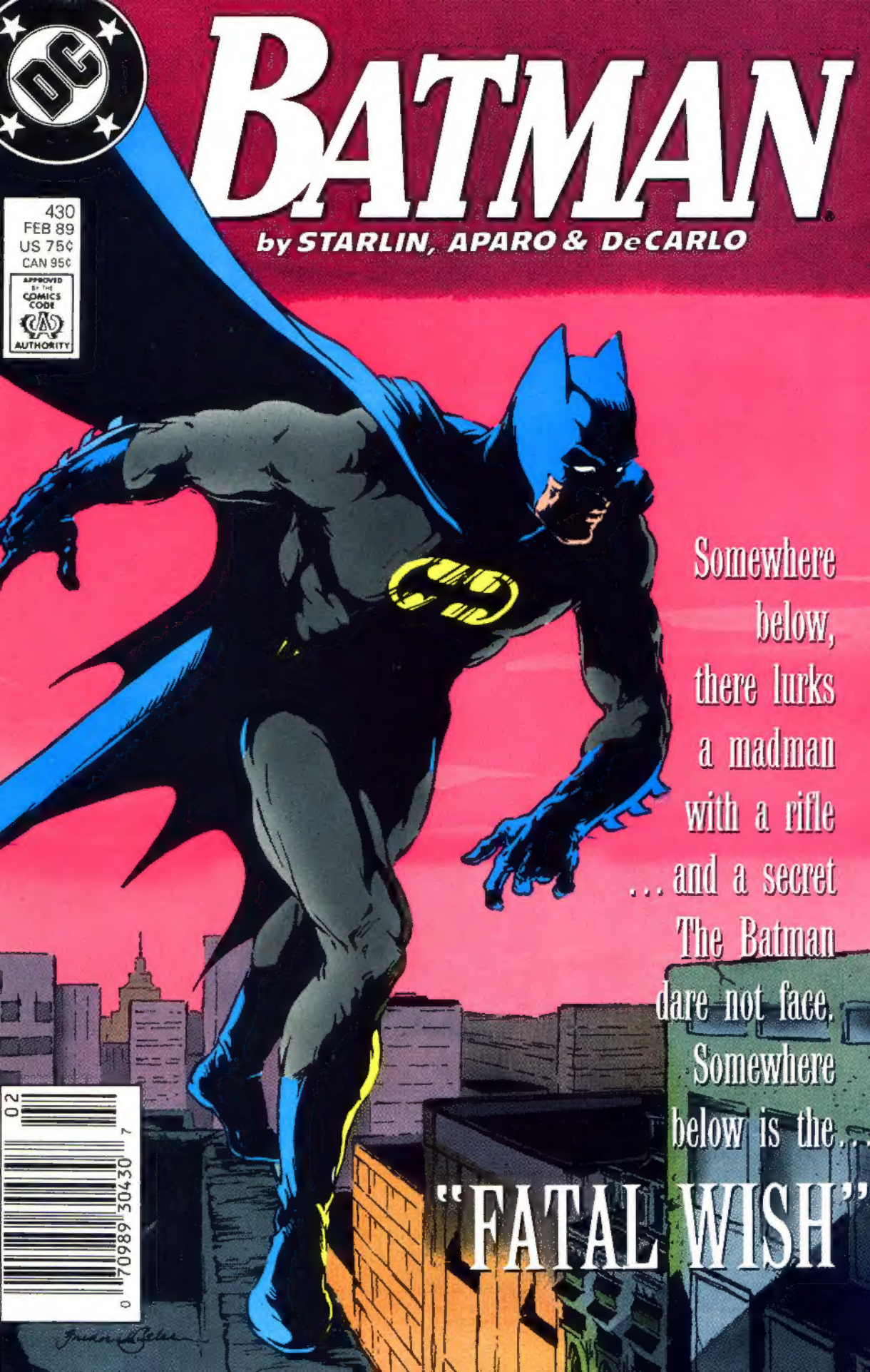
DC
BATMAN
by STARLIN, APARO & DeCARLO
430
FEB 89
US 75¢
CAN 95¢
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
Somewhere below, there lurks a madman with a rifle ... and a secret The Batman dare not face. Somewhere below is the...
"FATAL WISH"
0 70989 30430 7 02

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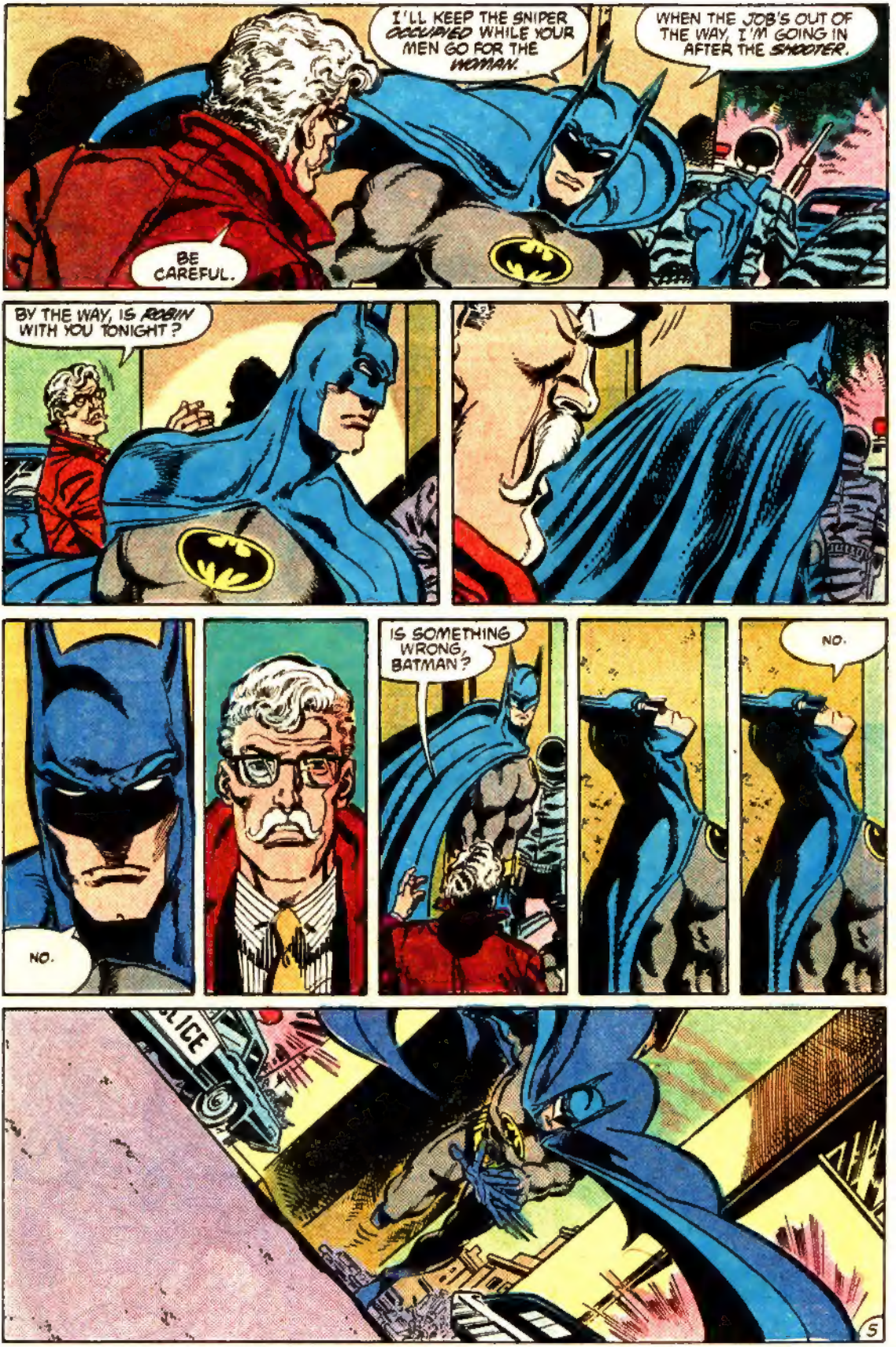
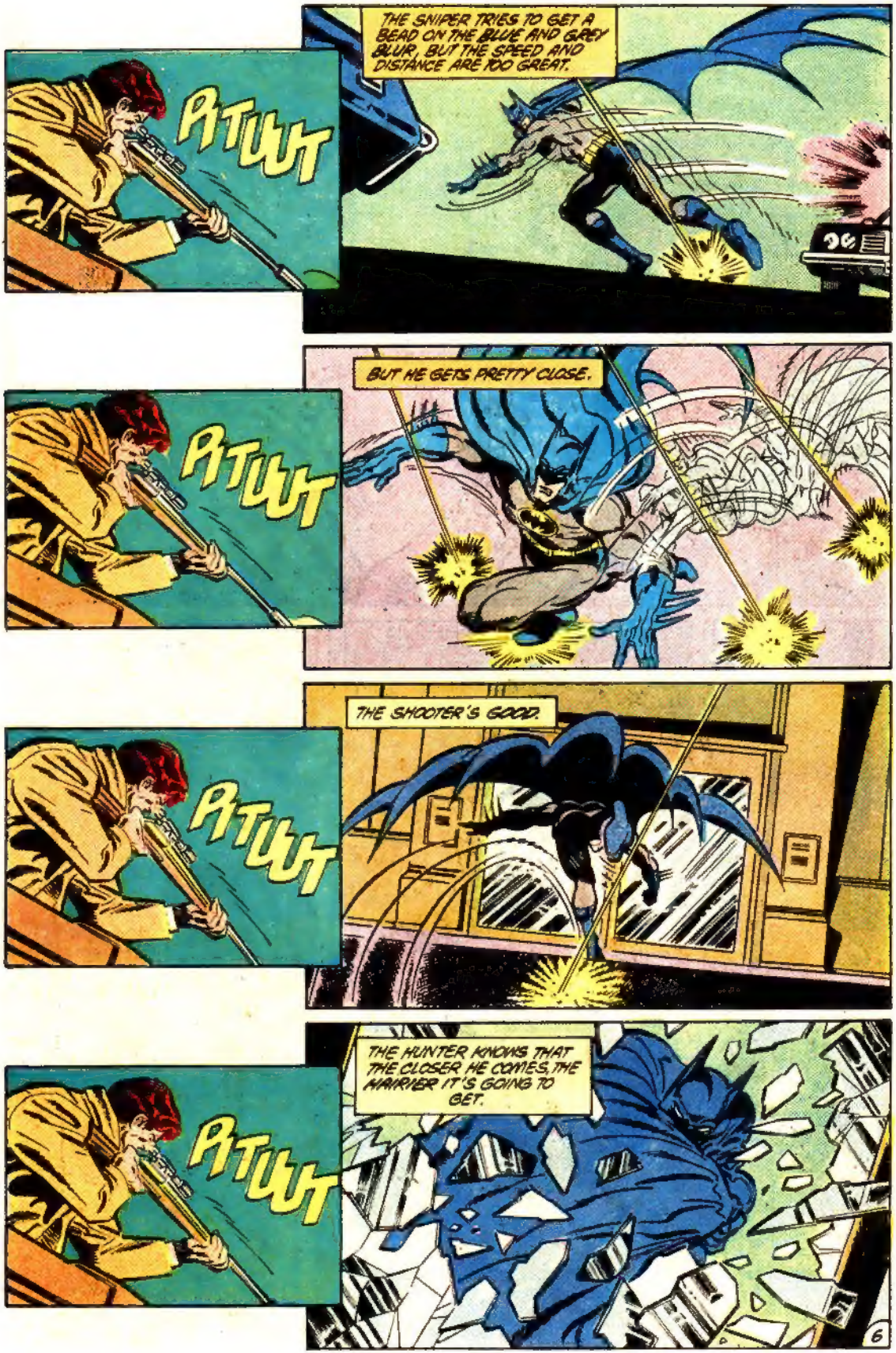
HUH?
GIANTS ROUT JX-7
Fashions by Stacy

LADY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
IT'S A SNIPER!
EVERYBODY RUN FOR IT!
PTUUT
PTUUT
PTUUT
3

FORTY MINUTES LATER.
WE'VE GOT 5 DEAD, 3 WOUNDED, ONE A WOMAN WE CAN'T REACH; TRAPPED OUT ON THE STREET.
THE SHOOTER'S NAME IS TIM CONRAD. JUST GOT FIRED FROM A BANKING FIRM INSIDE THAT OFFICE BUILDING.
LOOKS LIKE HE'S DECIDED TO TAKE HIS FRUSTRATIONS OUT ON THE WORLD.
HE'S GOT THE HIGH GROUND. IF WE TRY TO RUSH HIM, THERE'S GOING TO BE A BLOOD BATH.

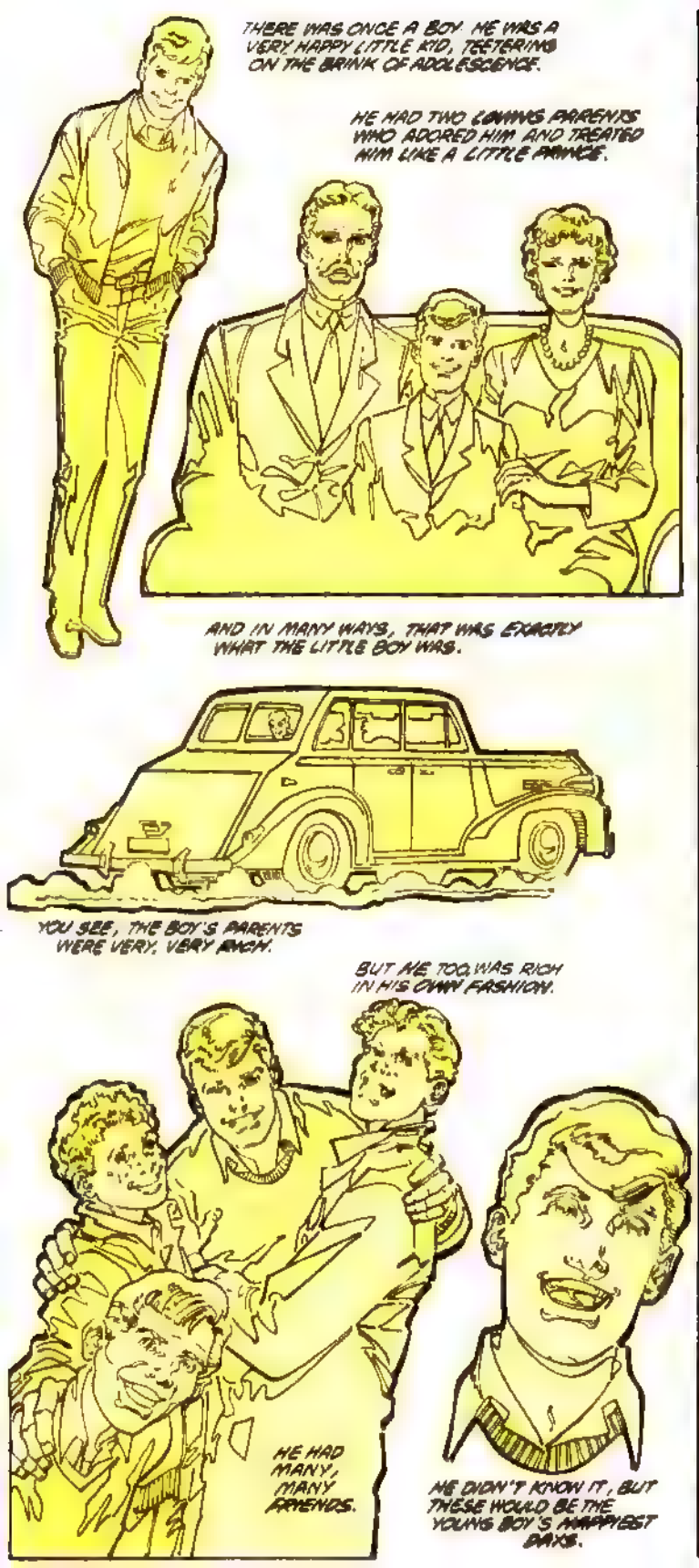
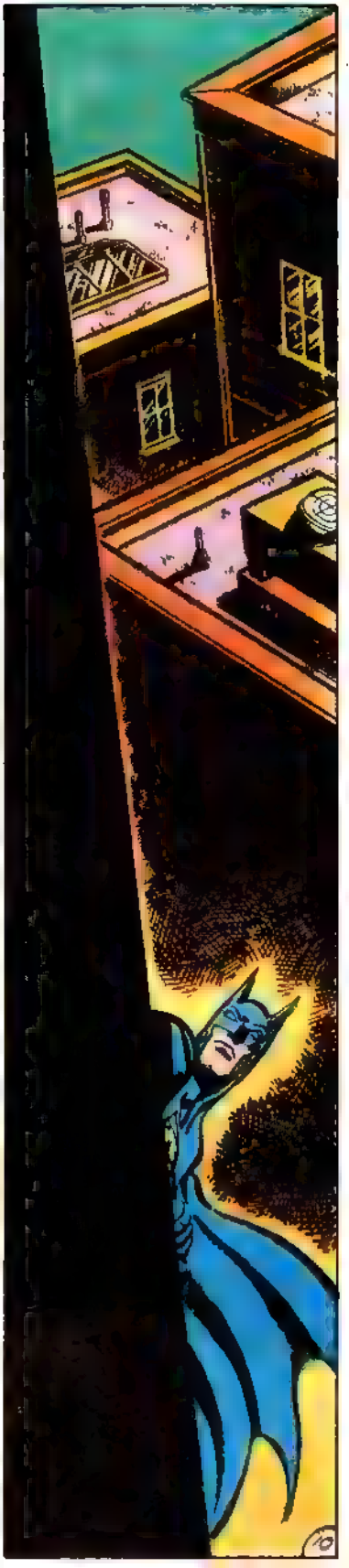

I'LL KEEP THE SNIPER OCCUPIED WHILE YOUR MEN GO FOR THE WOMAN.
WHEN THE JOB'S OUT OF THE WAY, I'M GOING IN AFTER THE SHOOTER.
BE CAREFUL.
BY THE WAY, IS ROBIN WITH YOU TONIGHT?
NO.
IS SOMETHING WRONG, BATMAN?
NO.
POLICE
5

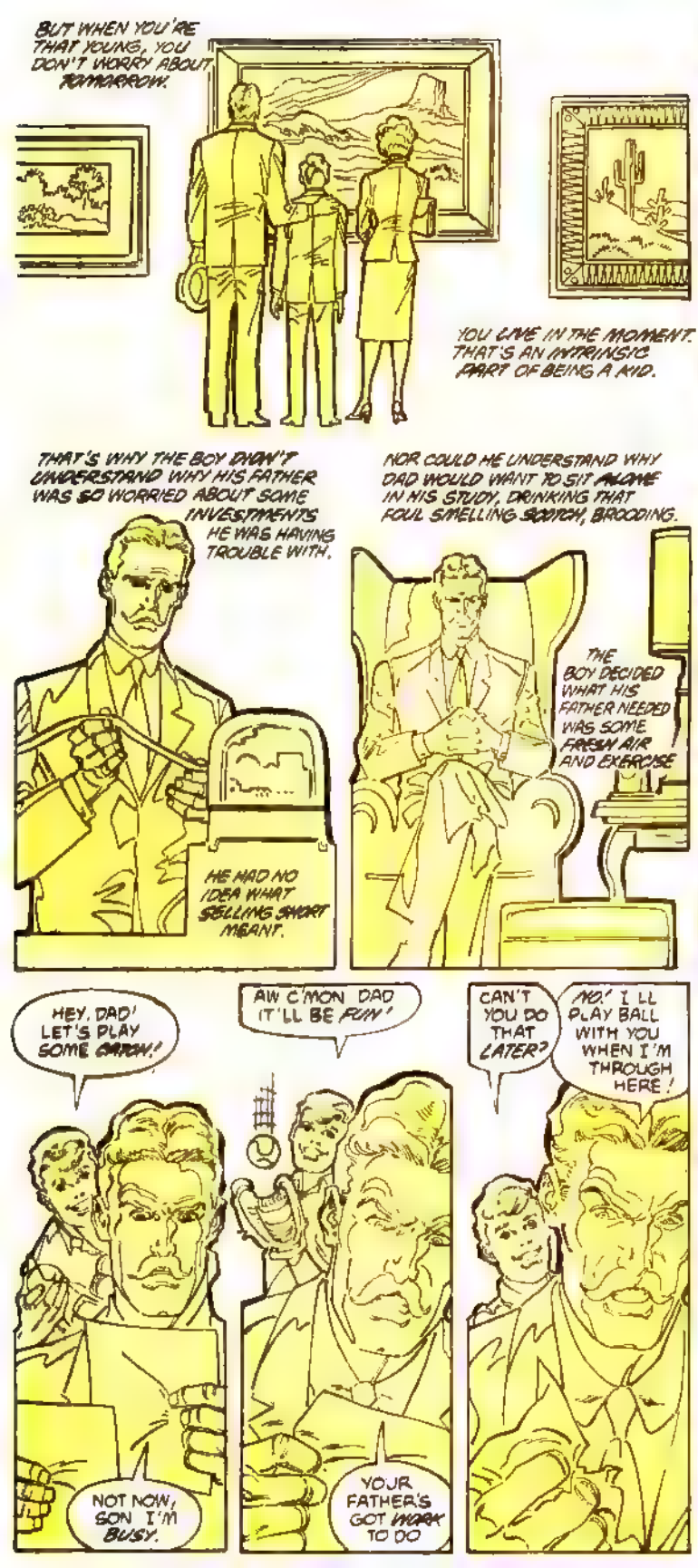

PTUUT
THE SNIPER TRIES TO GET A BEAD ON THE BLUE AND GREY BLUR, BUT THE SPEED AND DISTANCE ARE TOO GREAT.
PTUUT
BUT HE GETS PRETTY CLOSE.
PTUUT
THE SHOOTER'S GOOD.
PTUUT
THE HUNTER KNOWS THAT THE CLOSER HE COMES, THE HARRIER IT'S GOING TO GET.
6

THANK GOD! HE MADE IT!
AND WE'VE GOT THE WOMAN TO SAFETY.
HOW DOES THAT MASKED FREAK DO IT?
A BETTER QUESTION IS WHY DOES HE DO IT?
WHY?
OVER THE YEARS, I'VE OFTEN ASKED MYSELF THE SAME QUESTION.
THE MAN HAS AN ALMOST MANIACAL DRIVE TO SAVE INNOCENT LIVES AND PUNISH CRIMINALS.
I'VE NO REAL IDEA WHAT DRIVES HIM SO.
BUT I HAVE MY SUSPICIONS...
NO PROOF... ONLY SPECULATIONS...
BUT I'LL TELL YOU ONE THING.
I'M SURE GLAD HE'S ON OUR SIDE.
WOULDN'T WANT TO BE IN THAT SNIPER'S SHOES RIGHT NOW.
ROO
7

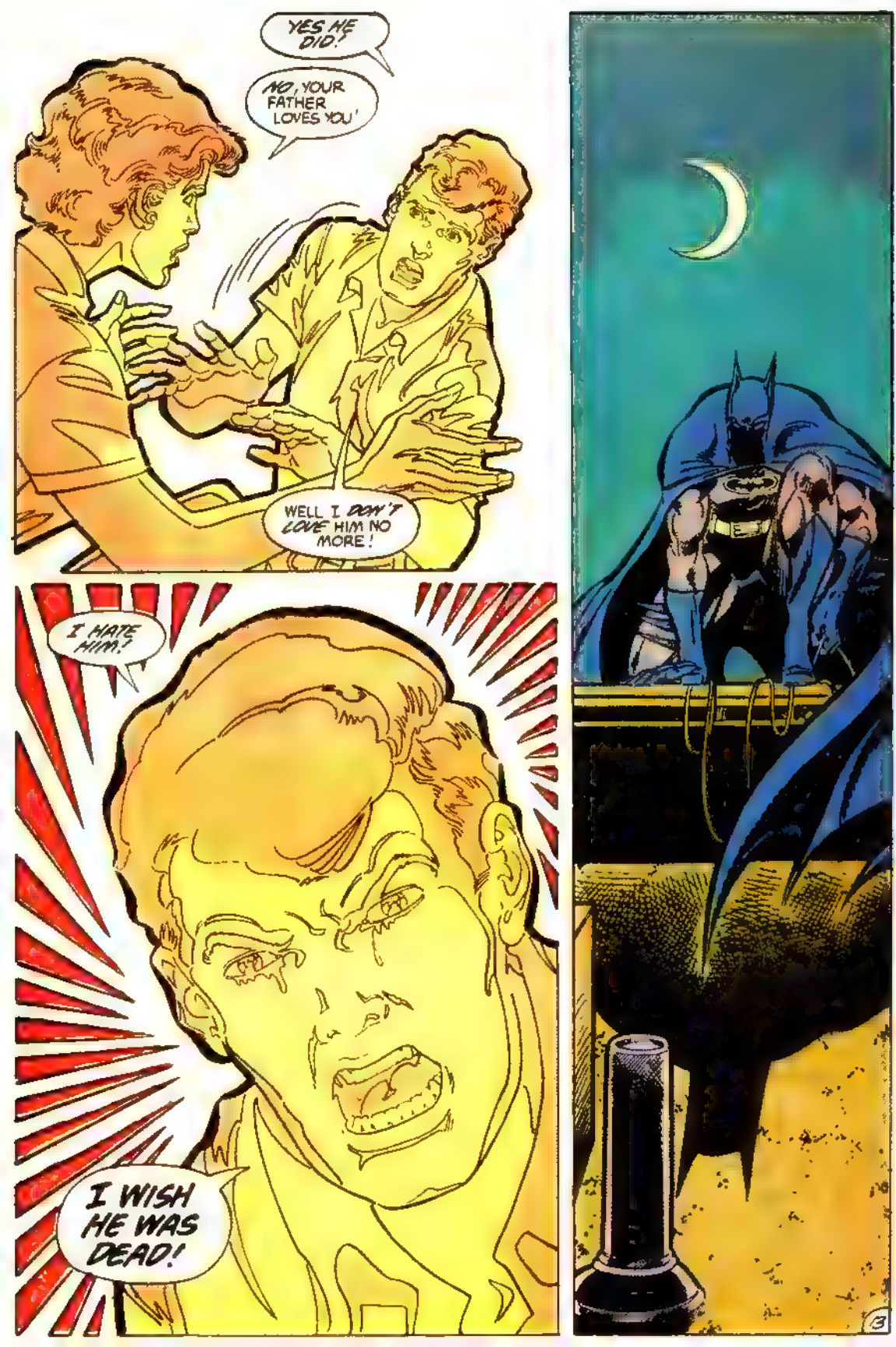
SOME INSTINCT TELLS HIM TO MOVE!
HE ALWAYS LISTENS TO THAT LITTLE VOICE.
ROOF
PITUUT
PITUUT
PITUUT
ONCE AGAIN IT'S SAVED HIS LIFE.
I KNOW YOU'RE THERE, BATMAN! YOU'RE NOT GOING TO TAKE ME ALIVE!
TODAY I KISS OFF THIS MISERABLE WORLD!
GONNA CHECK OUT OF THIS LOUSY LIFE!
BUT I'M NOT GOING BY MYSELF! YOU HEAR ME?!
MORE PEOPLE ARE GOING TO DIE! THEY DON'T DESERVE LIVING!
YOU'RE ALL EITHER LIARS, CHEATS OR HYPOCRITES!
NONE OF YOU SHOULD BE LEFT BREATHING!
I WISH YOU WERE ALL DEAD!

"I WISH YOU WERE ALL DEAD..."
O'NEIL AND RASPLER
CREATIVE CONSULTANTS
WISH YOU WERE ALL DEAD.
9


THERE WAS ONCE A BOY. HE WAS A VERY HAPPY LITTLE KID, TEETERING ON THE BRINK OF ADOLESCENCE.
HE HAD TWO LOVING PARENTS WHO ADORED HIM AND TREATED HIM LIKE A LITTLE PRINCE.
AND IN MANY WAYS, THAT WAS EXACTLY WHAT THE LITTLE BOY WAS.
YOU SEE, THE BOY'S PARENTS WERE VERY, VERY RICH.
BUT HE, TOO, WAS RICH IN HIS OWN FASHION.
HE HAD MANY, MANY FRIENDS.
HE DIDN'T KNOW IT, BUT THESE WOULD BE THE YOUNG BOY'S HAPPIEST DAYS.


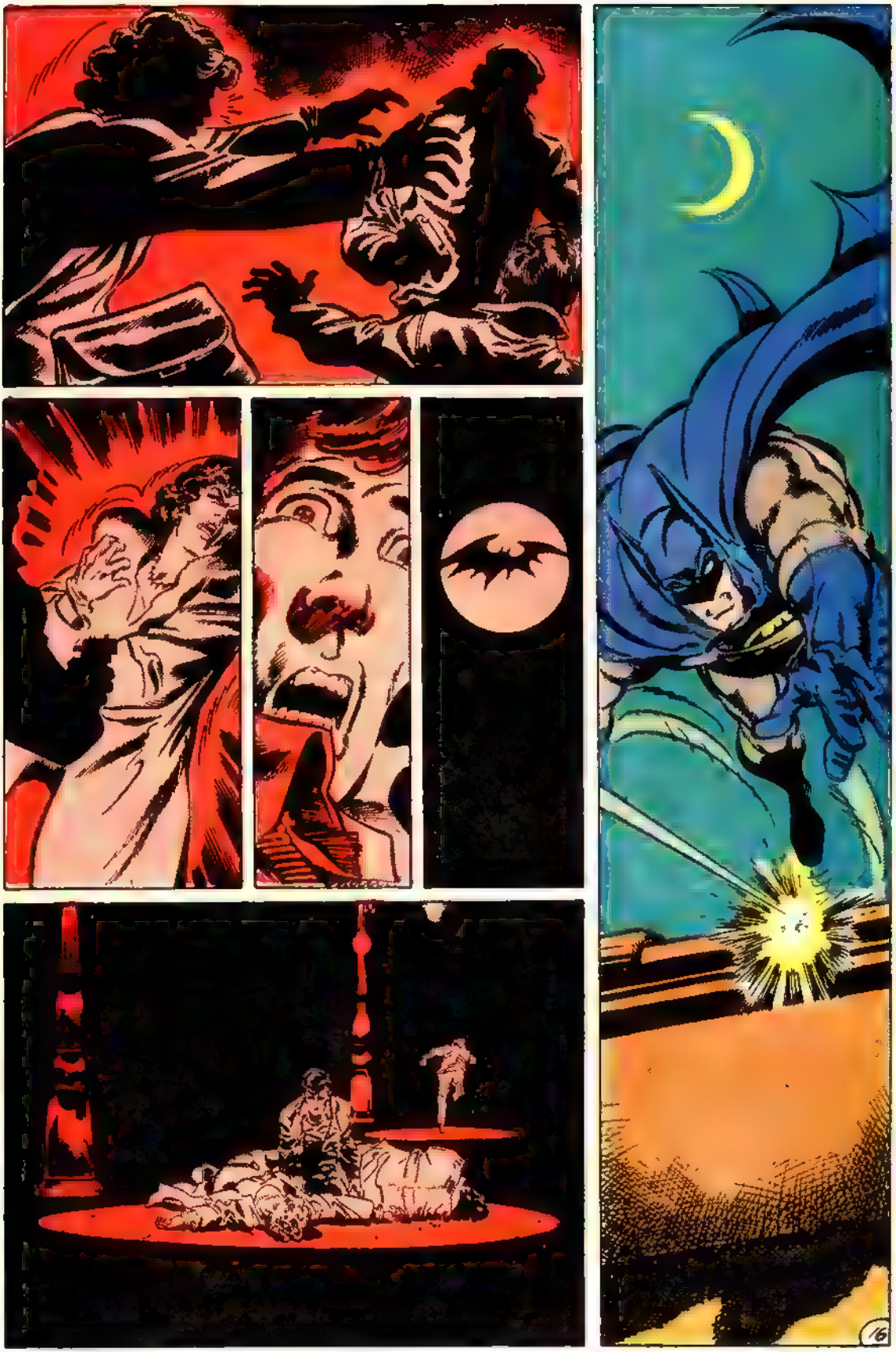

BUT WHEN YOU'RE THAT YOUNG, YOU DON'T WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW.
YOU LIVE IN THE MOMENT. THAT'S AN INTRINSIC PART OF BEING A KID.
THAT'S WHY THE BOY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY HIS FATHER WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT SOME INVESTMENTS HE WAS HAVING TROUBLE WITH.
HE HAD NO IDEA WHAT SELLING SHORT MEANT.
NOR COULD HE UNDERSTAND WHY DAD WOULD WANT TO SIT ALONE IN HIS STUDY, DRINKING THAT FOUL SMELLING SCOTCH, BROODING.
THE BOY DECIDED WHAT HIS FATHER NEEDED WAS SOME FRESH AIR AND EXERCISE
HEY, DAD! LET'S PLAY SOME CATCH!
NOT NOW, SON I'M BUSY.
AW C'MON DAD IT'LL BE FUN!
YOUR FATHER'S GOT WORK TO DO
CAN'T YOU DO THAT LATER?
NO! I'LL PLAY BALL WITH YOU WHEN I'M THROUGH HERE!

WHEN WILL THAT BE?
WILL YOU LEAVE ME ALONE!!
WHAP
SON. .
THOMAS, HOW COULD YOU?!
WHAT HAVE I DONE?
YOU'VE GOT TO TRY TO UNDERSTAND, SON
DADDY'S BEEN UNDER A STRAIN
HE DIDN'T MEAN IT
12

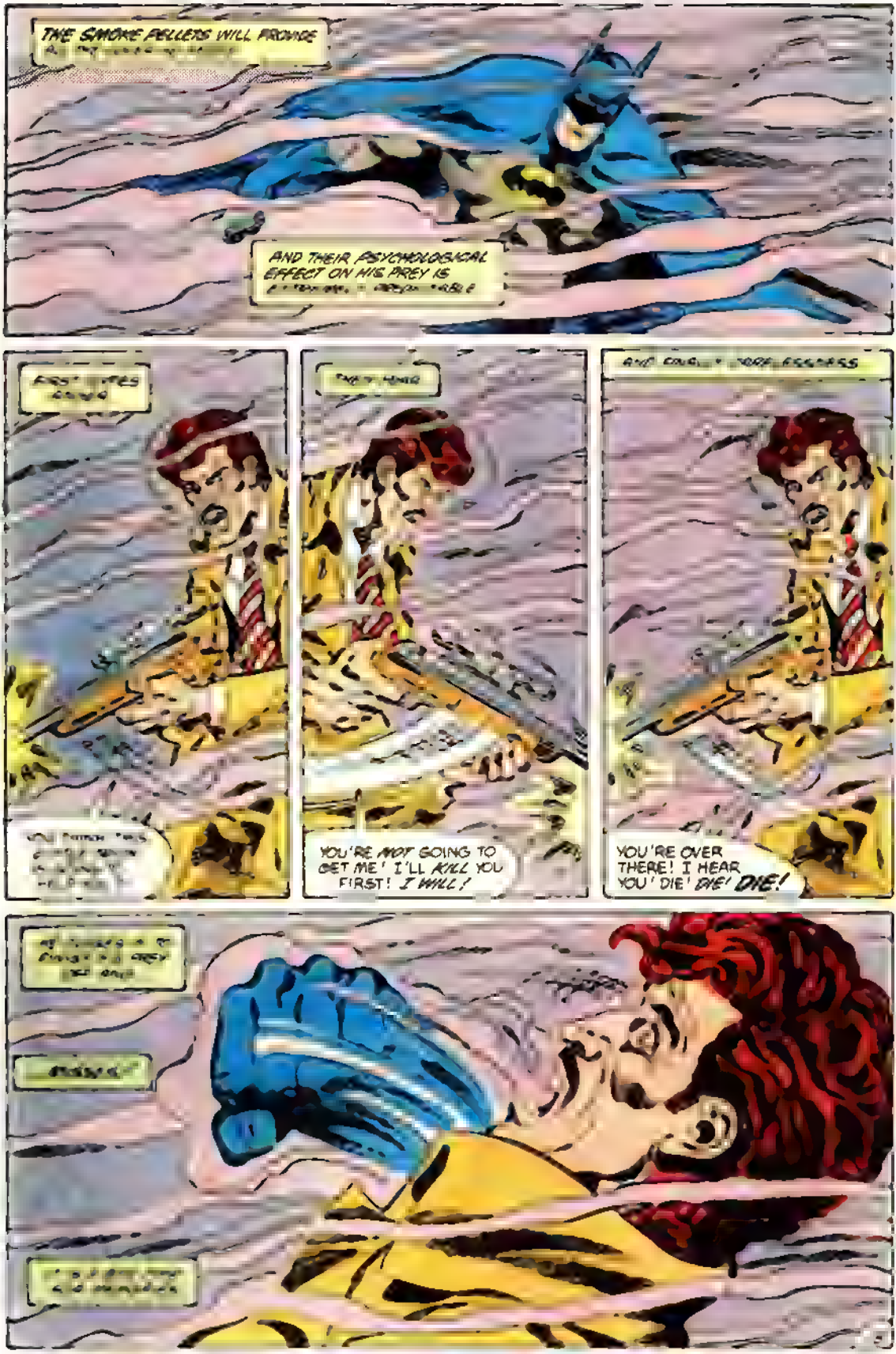

YES HE DID!
NO, YOUR FATHER LOVES YOU!
WELL I DON'T LOVE HIM NO MORE!
I HATE HIM!
I WISH HE WAS DEAD!

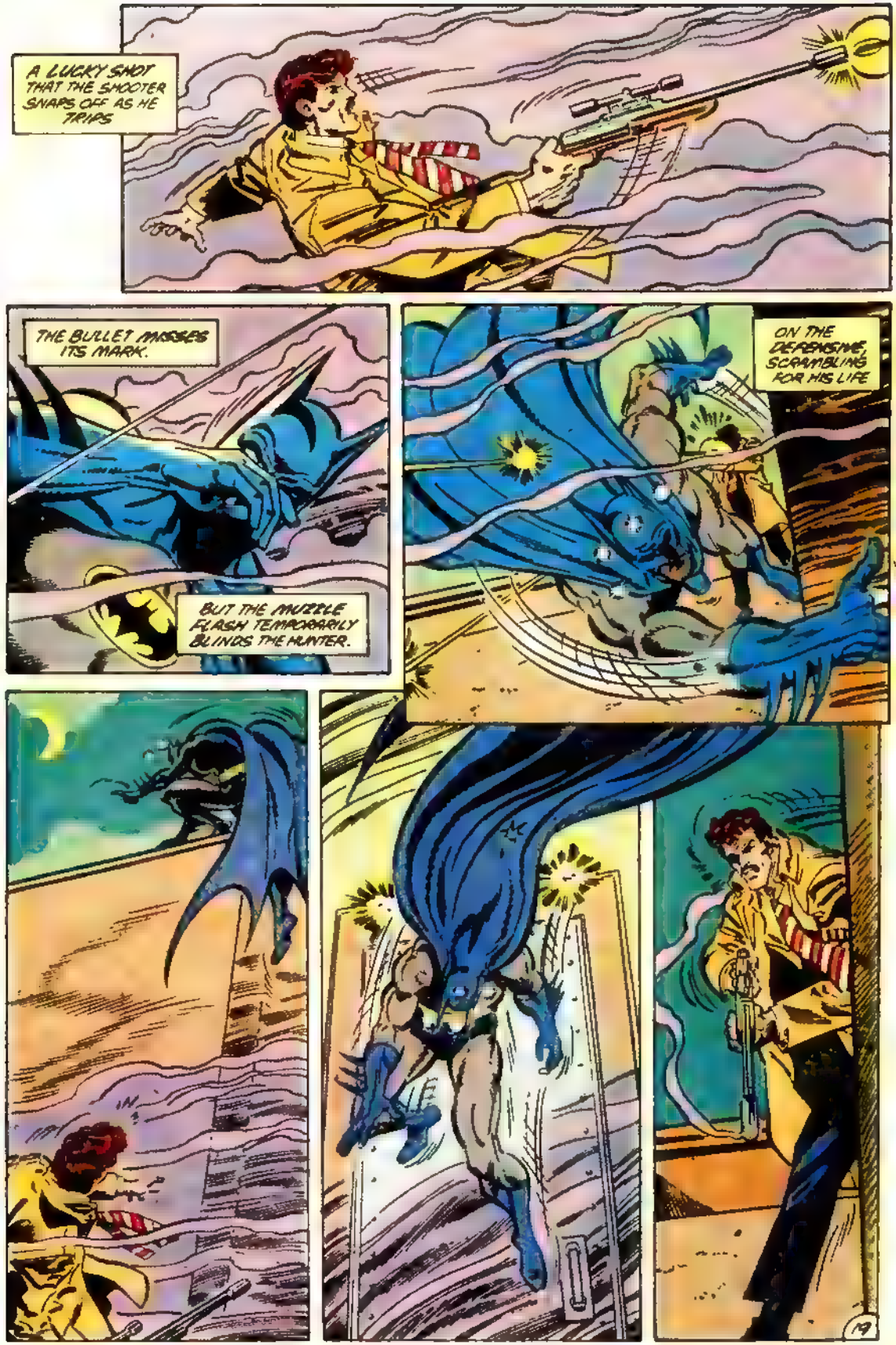
BUT THE END OF THE DAY BROUGHT A CONCLUSION TO THE FATHER'S FINANCIAL EMERGENCY AND A TIME FOR RECONCILIATION.
IT WASN'T EASY FOR THE MAN. HIS SON DIDN'T WANT TO FORGIVE HIM.
BUT SOMEHOW THE MAN FOUND THE RIGHT WORDS AND THE BOY SENSED THEIR SINCERITY.
ONCE AGAIN, ALL WAS RIGHT WITH THE WORLD.
TO MAKE UP FOR HIS WRETCHED BEHAVIOR, FATHER TOOK THE FAMILY OUT TO A MOVIE THE BOY HAD BEEN DYING TO SEE.
"ZORRO."
IT WAS PROBABLY THE BEST MOVIE THE BOY EVER SAW.
IT WAS A NICE NIGHT OUT, SO THE FAMILY DECIDED TO WALK HOME.
THAT WAS A MISTAKE.

A FATAL MISTAKE.

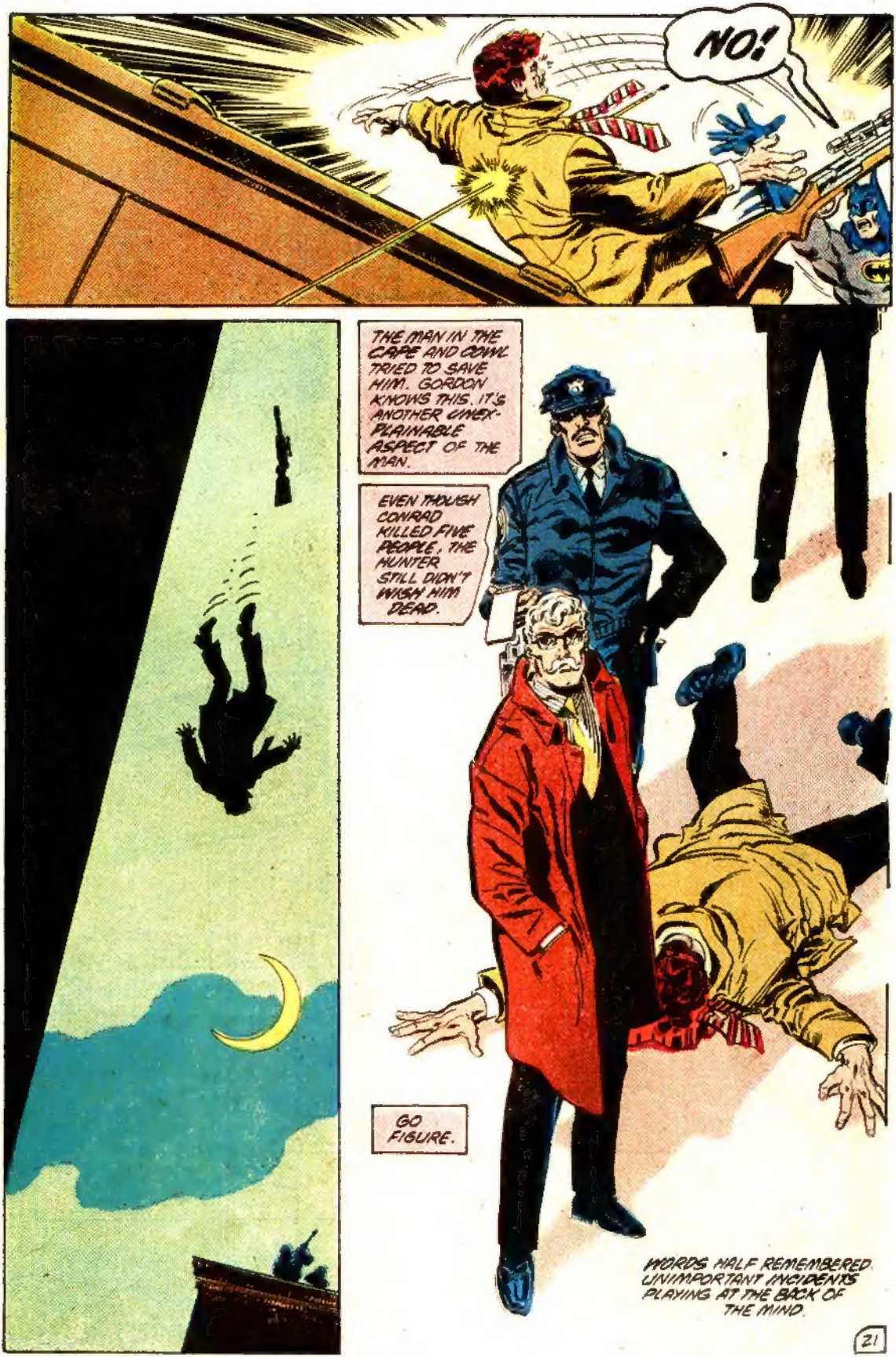


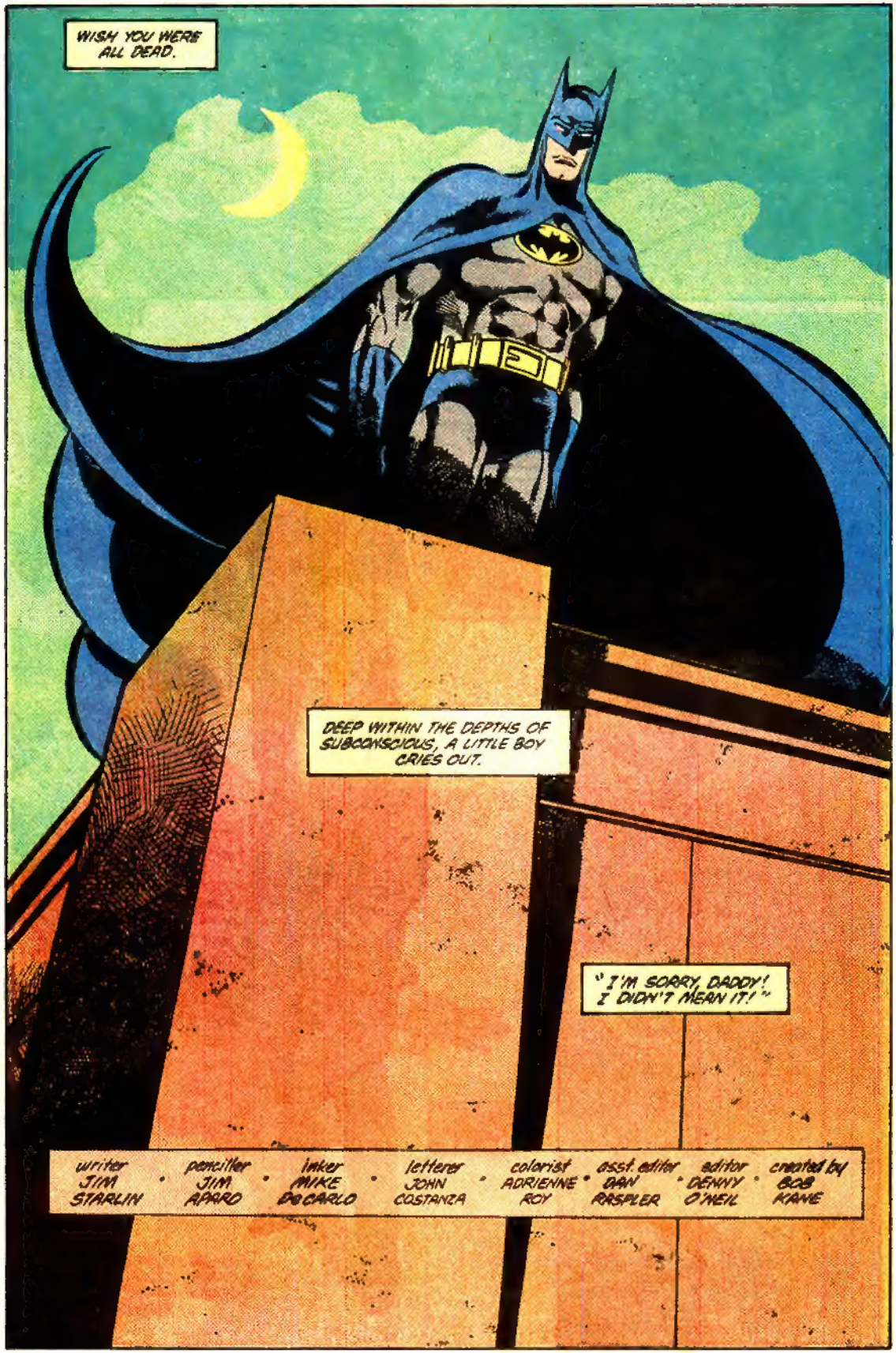
THE SHOOTER TURNS ON THE HEAT BUT THE HUNTER HAS SPENT A LIFETIME TRAINING FOR THIS JOB
A LIFETIME HAUNTED BY A MEMORY.
BUT EVEN ALL THAT EXPERIENCE DOESN'T GUARANTEE SUCCESS.
HIS FOOT DOESN'T QUITE CONNECT SOLIDLY ENOUGH WITH THE SNIPER'S JAW.


THE SMOKE PELLETS WILL PROVIDE
AND THEIR PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT ON HIS PREY IS
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET ME! I'LL KILL YOU FIRST! I WILL!
YOU'RE OVER THERE! I HEAR YOU! DIE! DIE! DIE!


A LUCKY SHOT THAT THE SHOOTER SNAPS OFF AS HE TRIPS
THE BULLET MISSES ITS MARK.
BUT THE MUZZLE FLASH TEMPORARILY BLINDS THE HUNTER.
ON THE DEFENSIVE, SCRAMBLING FOR HIS LIFE
19

GET AWAY FROM THE EDGE OF THE ROOF--
IT'S THE SHOOTER!!
GET AWAY--!
KA-TOW


NO!
THE MAN IN THE CAPE AND COWL TRIED TO SAVE HIM. GORDON KNOWS THIS. IT'S ANOTHER INEXPLAINABLE ASPECT OF THE MAN.
EVEN THOUGH CONRAD KILLED FIVE PEOPLE, THE HUNTER STILL DIDN'T WISH HIM DEAD.
GO FIGURE.
WORDS HALF REMEMBERED UNIMPORTANT INCIDENTS PLAYING AT THE BACK OF THE MIND.


WISH YOU WERE ALL DEAD.
DEEP WITHIN THE DEPTHS OF SUBCONSCIOUS, A LITTLE BOY CRIES OUT.
"I'M SORRY, DADDY! I DIDN'T MEAN IT!"
writer JIM STARLIN • penciller JIM APARO • inker MIKE DeCARLO • letterer JOHN COSTANZA • colorist ADRIENNE ROY • asst. editor DAN RASPLER • editor DENNY O'NEIL • created by BOB KANE

BAT-SIGNALS

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As I mentioned last issue, our offices have been thoroughly bombarded with letters of comment from readers concerning our "A Death in the Family" storyline. I quite honestly have never seen anything like this in my life. You've probably noticed the multi-media coverage we've been getting also. Astounding. Really. In addition to the Associated Press and Reuters, our saga has been mentioned in Time magazine, Newsweek, The Wall Street Journal, and on and on. The phone is ringing off the hook. It's something to behold. And it's only the beginning, I'm sure.

Well ... the show must go on. As before, letters have been shortened where appropriate in order to fit in a greater variety of comments.

Dear Dan and Den:

Normally I write lengthy dissertations about whatever pops into my mind when I sit down in front of my trusty typewriter. This letter is going to be different. Yes, this one is going to be short and to the point.

I missed the deadline for phoning in my 50¢ call, so let my vote be duly noted here: kill Robin! Murder Robin! Get rid of Robin! Gosh, I love venting my frustrations in the letter column, don't you?

Roger D. Case
1199 Waterfront Drive #202
Virginia Beach, VA 23451

* * * * *

People,

Should Jason/Robin live or die? Decisions, decisions ... As much as I've never understood the Robin character (that is, why would a colorful, frolicking semi-orphan be hanging out with a grim reaper of crime...), I somehow hate to see him terminated.

Don't get me wrong. I would rather see Batman alone/solo—instilling fear in the hearts of criminals and their ilk ... but the addition of Robin (Jason Todd) adds a touch of humanity, reality, and innocence to the Batman mystique and persona.

He sort of cuts the bitterness that is the Dark Knight Detective, much as vermouth cuts the gin in a martini (poetry?). I say, let Robin/Jason live. Let him tend to his studies, and grow as a human being. Allow him to become more learned and agile, and astute in the ways of the world.

He does NOT have to be utilized in every BATMAN story and adventure. He would be there when needed, yet discarded if the situation calls for such.

So, please, keep this in mind. At any rate—continued kudos to Starlin and Aparo for bringing the best out of Bats. Now, please, just get Starlin to pencil an issue or two for us "old" fans, okay?

Take care,
Lon Wolf
2118 Ryan's Run Court
Maple Shade, NJ 08052

* * * * *

Dear Denny,

BATMAN #427 was much better than #426. I still don't buy the sheer ludicrousness of the mass coincidences, but at least the Joker was portrayed as a sociopathic killer instead of a generic terrorist. I never cared much for Jason Todd, but when the Joker started Jason's "spanking," I must admit I actually felt sorry for the little tyke. It's not enough to stop my vote, though—he's history if I have anything to say about it (and I think I'll have a LOT to say about it; I sold my new Mercedes to have enough money for votes. Bye, bye, Jason!). This is an extremely violent way for Jason to go: beaten, then blown up real good! I just hope Batman gets "an eye for an eye" from the Joker. I'm tired of seeing villains get off scot-free in comics. I want to see the Joker punished for his crimes. Punished BAD.

I think Jim Starlin has done a good job writing BATMAN, but I do have one complaint about the book: the art. I don't like the way Jim Aparo draws Batman. I don't mean any offense to Mr. Aparo, but I think all his characters' faces look too similar.

A final thought: now that Robin is DEAD DEAD DEAD, keep Batman alone for a while. He deserves some peace and solitude after four long years of the Bat-brat.

Sincerely,
Jerry Smith
106 Bluffside Drive
Covington, KY 41017

* * * * *

Dear Denny and Dan,

Right off the bat (so to speak) I want you to know that I plan on voting for the demise of Jason Todd. I have always found that Jason did more harm to the stories than good. The focus of these stories is the Caped Crusader, not the Boy Wonder. Yes, I enjoyed Jason in THE CULT, and the last few issues of BATMAN. But up until that point, I always considered him a bit of a faker. He's a stinking carbon copy, for starters. He also has had about a hundred radical personality switches. He's also about ten years old, which is too dumb for words.

Now, I don't want you to think that all confused ten-year-olds deserve death. It's just that in an ongoing continuity-oriented storyline, consistency is the operative term. And rather than see another retroactive origin, I figure, let's moidah da bum!

(Name and address withheld)

Due to the extra-long lag time between issues #427 and #428, we are in a position to print comments on #428 in this issue. Read on!

Dear Bat-people,

I regretfully voted for Jason to die. At first, when I heard that you were going to kill him, I was overjoyed. But now that I've read the issue of Robin's demise, well, I ... I'm sorry I helped kill him. Don't get me wrong, I think his death will improve Batman's already mean-spirited nature. But I'm still a little broken up. Hell, I even felt bad when Supergirl died, and I didn't even like her. I think you should dedicate an issue to Robin—a memorial for the little spud. From what I've seen so far, Bats isn't really that broken up. I expected him to scream out and bash something, not just sit there quietly. I know, self-control—but everyone needs to grieve, to be human. And I think that you should show this side of Batman in an issue dedicated to the Boy Wonder who fought side by side with the Dark Knight.

Thank you,
Thomas Staab
(No address given)

P.S. Sorry about Jason, Bats, but that's life in the comics biz.

* * * * *

Dear Denny and Daniel,

Book Three of "A Death in the Family" (BATMAN #428) was a vast improvement over the first two chapters. The plot seemed tighter, making the pace excellent. This script showcased Starlin's mastery of exposition, on which I waxed eloquent in an earlier LoC. Starlin makes exposition seem so natural, unlike so many comics writers who bore readers who don't need to know "what happened last issue." The recaps of Jason's career and the earlier part of this adventure at the beginning of Book

Three actually contributed to this issue's storyline by making the reader care more about Bruce/Batman.

The art was also excellent; Jim Aparo is now closer to regaining his excellent layouting of the early 70's which he seemed to have lost in later years on BRAVE AND BOLD and THE OUTSIDERS. I particularly enjoyed his blocking of the Superman/Batman confrontation at the end of the book. He also did a terrific job on the first part of the book, as Batman reminisced while looking through the debris, eventually discovering Sheila's and Jason's bodies.

I hope that the pace of "A Death in the Family" continues to quicken as we enter the final chapter. Also, don't rush to create a new partner for the Dark Knight. I kind of like him as a solo act.

Frank Balkin
Filmic Writing Dept.
School of Cinema-TV, USC
Los Angeles, CA 90089

* * * * *

Dear Denny and Dan,

Well, I saw Robin's death coming when you announced that the fans would decide his fate: they seem especially bloodthirsty lately. In fact, I didn't get to discover Robin's demise by reading the story because some yo-yo customer at the comics store was flipping through his copy and began chortling: "He's dead! The little meddler's dead!" I felt embarrassed to be in the same hobby (and species) as the dolt, and I even became nostalgic for the relative solitude of the newsstand.

The story, however, does open up some rare dramatic possibilities for the title. And although "The Darknight Returns" is set in some unreachable future, we can now trace some connections to Miller's tale, such as the escalating conflict between Batman and Superman and, sadly, the story behind that Robin costume in the display case.

Because I've always liked the Robin character, I voted for the miracle escape. Perhaps as consolation to the minority, you could have Dick Grayson reclaim the costume as a tribute to Jason, a twist on Wally's claiming of Barry's Flash garb.

Kenneth J. Carson
(Address withheld)

Okay, I gotta cut in here for a minute. I'm sorry someone spoiled the surprise for you, Kenneth. If you're like me, you like to find out about what happens to the characters WHEN YOU READ THE ISSUE, and not when some moron opens his yap in a comics store. I'm the first to admit I'm a little neurotic about over-informative coming attractions, but for those of you who like to give away the ends of mystery stories in public places (you know who you are), PLEASE STOP. It drives me bats. >Ahem.<

* * * * *

Dear Editor:

"He's dead, Jim." Who do we have to thank for the death of Robin? Why us, of course. We, the bloodthirsty readers who just love to watch heroes get wasted, are the ones responsible for his death.

I regret that I missed the dates on which I could have saved the late Robin's life. I may not have cared for Robin, but he had a right to live, just as anyone else. I only hope the Joker doesn't die by the end of the story.

I want to thank the Dynamic Duo—Jim Starlin and Jim Aparo—for an incredible story. This has definitely had an effect on the Batman's life.

I expect to see Batman dealing with Robin's death over the next dozen issues. I feel sorry for the aliens he will be running across during the INVASION!

Eric Recla
201 Lucinda Drive
Garland, TX 75040

Well, as you read this issue, Eric, The Batman's concentration is not what it should be. Being in touch with his emotions has never been Batman's strong suit, and I'm sure you can appreciate the anguish he's going through now.

* * * * *

Dear Dan,

"A Death in the Family" Part Three really hurt. I'm not 100% sorry that Jason is dead for two reasons. One is that there should not have been a second Robin. Dick Grayson's shoes are impossible to fill. The other reason is that he was a killer. Batman could not continue to let him fight crime. What really hurt me about this story is that Jim Starlin is not going to let Batman get at the Joker. Okay, the Joker is an ambassador of Iran to the U.N., but so what? Batman is a vigilante, I'm sure he's broken laws before. This is getting to be too much. When Batgirl was crippled by the Joker, Batman shared a joke with him. Now with Jason dead, I'm afraid of what Batman will do. Or rather, not do. Maybe take him out to lunch? I hope I'm jumping to conclusions, but somehow, I doubt it. Even if nothing happens to the Joker, I hope Dick at least comes to talk to Batman. He's in serious need of help.

Patiently waiting 30 days,
George Gustines
100 W. 105 Street, Apt. C2
New York, NY 10025

* * * * *

To whom it may concern:

Yesterday morning I heard a report on the radio that DC Comics did a poll after publishing issue #427 of BATMAN in which Robin ended up looking like a goner. The report said that readers voting for Robin's death had outnumbered, by a slight margin, those who wanted him to live. Because the margin was small, I write you to

SAVE ROBIN!!!!!

Because:

1. This year seems to be one of cruddy polls.

2. Too many dependable (or seemingly so) relationships are ended these days.

3. We've got to be able to count on something.

4. Who's Batman without his buddy?

5. I, and my two sons, number three that close up your darn margin a tad. We really wish we had been in the crowd you polled.

LET ROBIN LIVE!!!

Sincerely,
Mary Madeira
Willy and Sam Madeira
Wyndmoor, PA

Sorry, Mary, Willy, and Sam, but the die has been cast, and the polls closed on the evening of September 16. As I said last issue, I voted to keep Jason alive, but to no avail.

Okay. Now hear this, Bat-fans. As of next issue (#431) our regular writer, Jim Starlin, will be taking a few months off to write, pencil, and ink our newest Prestige Format epic saga, GILGAMESH II. For those of you who have been waiting patiently for Starlin to pick up a pencil again on a long-term basis, this book will absolutely kill you. It'll be colored by Steve Oliff, and will debut some time in the spring of 1989.

Meanwhile, here in BATMAN, our art team of Jim Aparo and Mike DeCarlo will be staying on for the duration, while the writing chores for the next two issues will be taken up by James Owsley, who's been handling the Green Lantern chapter for us in ACTION COMICS WEEKLY. And beginning in issue #433, we'll be starting a three-issue blockbuster series in BATMAN written by famous horror novelist John L. Byrne.

—Dan Raspler
Assistant Editor

FROM THE DEN

Please don't ask, okay? Believe it: I don't *know* anything about the movie.

Well, that's not exactly true. I've read the final script for the big-screen *Batman*, which, as I write this in mid-October, is just beginning to be made in England. And I know who the principal actors are: Michael Keaton in the title role; Sean Young as Vicki Vale; Pat Hingle as Commissioner Gordon; and—the casting coup of the decade—Jack Nicholson as The Joker.

Anything else?

A bit. The film is being directed by Tim Burton, the *wunderkind* who shot Mike Carlin's favorite flick, *Pee Wee's Big Adventure*, and the comedy hit of this past summer, *Beetlejuice*. The script is by Sam Hamm, about whom I'll be writing more in a month or two, and Warren Skarren. (Do you have to have rhyming names to work on this project? Just wondering.)

None of this is exactly news. But, apart from having access to the script, I have no better information than anyone who gives the gossip columns a careful read. But ah, you say, how can this be true? How can the man who actually *edits* the Batman titles be as woefully ignorant as the ruck of humanity concerning the Caped Crusader's major movie debut?

I reply modestly: Years of practice.

DENNY